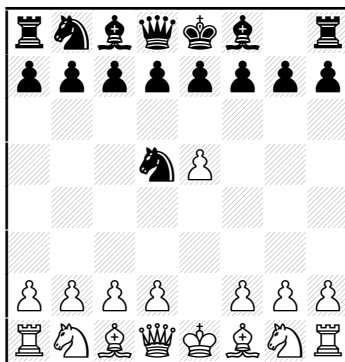


Alekhine's Defence [B02–05]

Written by GM Nigel Davies & IM Andrew Martin

Last updated Tuesday, August 10, 2004



Alekhine's Defence is one of Black's most dynamic reactions to 1 e4. Rarely played at super-GM level, it remains however a dangerous weapon for club and international players alike. Black gives White the opportunity to set up a massive pawn centre, which he or she will then attempt to destroy.

The Four Pawns Attack is White's most direct option but at present Black's counterplay seems sufficient. Many White players are currently opting for safe lines with c4 and exd6, with prospects of a slight edge. The Chase Variation is rarely played and probably better than its reputation. The main line remains 4 Nf3 where White is doing fairly well, but there remains much room for debate.

An opening for the enterprising player!

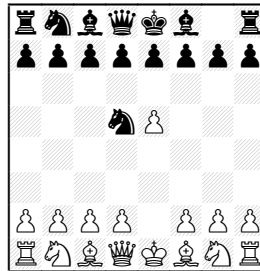
All the games given in [blue](#) can be accessed via ChessPub.exe, simply head for their respective ECO code.

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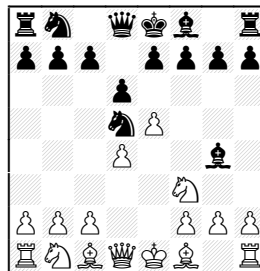
3 d4

3 c4 Alekhine's Defence–Not 2 e5, & 2 e5 without 3 d4 [B02]

3...d6 4 Nf3

4 c4 $\text{N}b6$ 5 f4 (5 *exd6* Alekhine's Defence–Exchange (5 *exd6*),+ other 3rd moves [B03])
5...*dxe5* 6 *fxe5* Alekhine's Defence–Four Pawns Attack [B03]

4... Qg4



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5 ♗e2 e6 6 0-0

Alekhine's Defence–4 Nf3 Bg4 [B05]

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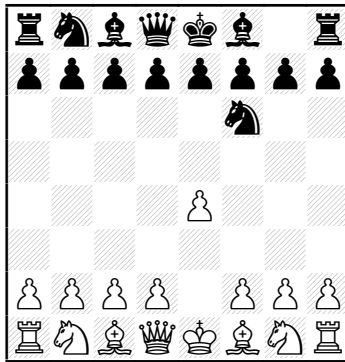
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Alekhine's Defence – Not 2 e5, & 2 e5 without 3 d4 [B02]

Last updated: 11/06/04 by Andy Martin

1 e4 ♘f6

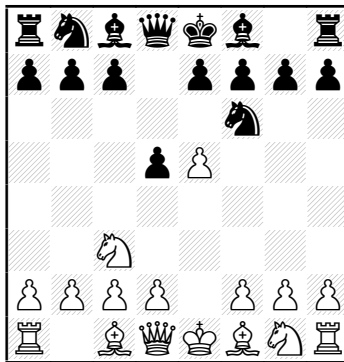


2 e5

2 ♘c3 This is not a very popular move. But as we shall see, Black has to solve a lot of problems after 2...d5 (The main drawback of this line is that Black can transpose into a Vienna with 2...e5 this has turned it into a no-go area for all but Vienna players, which also explains why there are so few GM games with it. Having said that, the two Vienna-wielding GMs that I know of (Balashov and Hector) both go 2 Nc3 against the Alekhine, and Hector in particular has notched up tremendous results for White and his games bristle with new ideas.)

a) 3 exd5 ♘xd5 4 ♙c4 (4 ♘ge2 is a type of Centre Counter, see [Keres,P–Mikenas,V/URS 1968](#). 4 g3 ♘xc3 5 bxc3 ♙d7 6 ♙g2 ♙c6 isn't very dangerous at all for Black. Neutralising the g2 Bishop in this way guarantees a good game. 7 ♘f3 g6 8 0-0 ♙g7 9 ♖e1 0-0= [Novitzkij,D–Kupreichik,V/Minsk BLR 2004](#)) 4...c6 5 ♗f3!?! a few years ago a young Galkin tried to defend this line three times as Black against Skatchkov and lost each time. Now increased popularity has led to Black's resources being better understood, see [Markovic,M–Andonov,B/Belgrade YUG 2002](#).

b) 3 e5



b1) 3...d4

b1a) if instead 4 ♖ce2 Black has nothing better than 4...♖e4 transposing to 3...Ne4, as (4...d3 5 ♗f4! dxc2 6 ♜xc2 leads to a serious advantage for White.)

b1b) 4 exf6 4...dxc3 5 fxg7 cxd2+ 6 ♙xd2 ♙xg7 [Hector,J-Kengis,E/Haninge \(Sweden\) 1992.](#)

b2) 3...♖e4 4 ♗ce2! The critical move, aiming to gain time against Black's errant knight.

b2a) The other method of disrupting White's plans is with 4...d4 5 c3 White should undermine the d4 pawn as soon as possible, otherwise Black will strengthen it, with a comfortable game. (5 ♗f3!? N ♖c6 6 c3 ♙g4 7 ♗exd4 ♗xe5 8 ♜e2 ♜d5 9 ♖b5 0-0-0 10 c4 ♜e6 11 d4 ♗g6 12 d5 ♜f5 13 ♗bd4± A remarkable mess where White has the upper hand in view of Black's hanging pieces. 13...♜e5 14 ♗xe5 ♙xe2 15 ♗xg6 ♙xf1 16 ♗xh8 ♙xc4 17 ♗xf7 ♜xd5 18 ♗e6 ♜f5 19 ♗xf8 ♗xf2 20 ♜g1 ♙xf7 21 g4 ♗d3+ 22 ♖e2 1-0 [Schmaltz,R-Gikas,B/Bundesliga 2002](#)) 5...♖c6! 6 cxd4 ♗g5 7 f4 ♖c6 8 ♗f3 [Nisipeanu,L-Bagirov,V/Cuxhaven 1994.](#)

b2b) 4...f6 5 d3 ♗g5 6 ♙xg5! White gives up his Bishop, but gets strong pressure on the h-file. 6...fxg5 7 h4 g4 (7...gxh4 8 ♗f4 g6 9 ♜h4 [Vorotnikov,V-Kengis,E/Tallinn 1983](#), which has to be seen to be believed. White launches a sharp theoretical attack. Black has to reply with a string of only moves, eventually sacrificing his queen for a minor piece to reach a drawn ending queen for bishop down!) 8 ♗f4 ♙f5 9 ♗ge2 [Hector,J-Van Der Werf,M/Berlin \(Germany\) 1993.](#)

b3) 3...♗fd7

b3a) After 4 d4 there is 4...c5!? (4...e6 5 f4 c5 6 ♗f3 we get a Steinitz variation of the French.) 5 ♗f3 e6 6 dxc5 ♗c6 7 ♙f4 ♙xc5 which transposed into a Steinitz variation of the French in [Cherniaev – Baburin, 10th Monarch Assurance 2001](#)

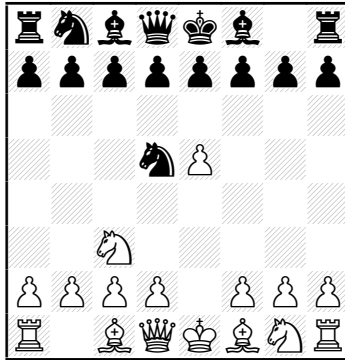
b3b) 4 e6 This pawn sac is White's sharpest option. 4...fxe6 5 d4 g6 (5...c5 6 ♗f3 ♗c6 7 ♙b5!? Hector's move, fighting for control of the d4 and e5 squares, [Hector,J-Sergeev,V/Berlin \(Germany\) 1995.](#)) 6 h4 ♙g7 7 h5 [Hector,J-Maus,S/Copenhagen \(Denmark\) 1990.](#)

2 d3 is a quiet but far from innocuous line to which the best answer may be 2...c5 (2...e5 3 ♗f3 ♗c6 4 ♙e2 ♙e7 5 c3 0-0 6 0-0 d5 7 ♜c2 a5 8 ♗bd2 ♜e8 9 ♜e1 ♙f8 10 b3 b6 11 a3 ♙b7 12 ♙b2 ♗b8 13 ♙f1 dxe4 14 dxe4 ♗bd7 15 b4 was better for White in [Csom,I-Cooper,J/Nice 1974](#) 2...d5 3 e5 ♗fd7 4 f4 e6 5 ♗f3 c5 6 g3 ♗c6 7 ♙g2 ♙e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 c4 gave White a favourable pawn structure in [Zaichik,G-Dreev,A/Lvov 1987](#)) 3 f4 ♗c6 4 ♗f3 g6 and

now 5 g3 leads to positions akin to a Closed Sicilian (5 ♕e2 ♕g7 6 ♖bd2? d5 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♜h1 b6 9 exd5 was good for Black in [Thomas,G–Alekhine,A/Baden–Baden 1925](#)).

2...♖d5 3 c4

3 ♖c3



An old line favoured by Keres. White accepts some flaws in his pawn structure but in return obtains free piece play. 3...♖xc3 this natural move is definitely the best, (3...e6 4 ♖xd5 exd5 and now 5 ♜f3!?) is a relatively recent idea. The queen intends to pressurize the black kingside early in the game, [Oral,T–Pribyl,J/Pardubice CZE 2002](#)) 4 dxc3 This move contradicts the well-known principle of capturing "towards the centre". But it has its points. White tries to gain an advantage in development, and maybe create pressure on the d-file. (4 bxc3 This old line is not so popular nowadays, however the Ukrainian GM Vladimir Baklan plays it with great success. 4...d5 5 d4 c5 6 ♖f3 ♖c6 [Baklan,V–Miroshnichenko,E/Alushta 1999](#).) 4...d6 5 ♖f3 The main line

the alternatives are harmless.

- a) 5...♖c6 6 ♕f4?! After this Black can transpose into what is probably a favourable endgame. 6...g6 (6...dxe5!) 7 ♕c4 [Toothill,J–Davies,N/Birmingham 4NCL 2001](#).
- b) 5...dxe5 6 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 7 ♖xe5 [Rozenalis,E–Volzhin,A/Poland 2000](#).

3...♖b6 4 c5

The Chase Variation is infrequently played but is a direct challenge to the Alekhine's and Black must know how to react to it. This is one of the sharpest attempts to "refute" Alekhine's Defence, advancing his central pawns White obtains a space advantage. The main expert in this line is the Russian GM Evgeny Sveshnikov who invariably plays it against the Alekhine's.

4...♖d5 5 ♕c4

Or 5 ♖c3 e6 (5...c6 6 ♕c4 d6 7 ♜b3 White has to play this move, if he wants to fight for the advantage, [Sveshnikov,E–Knezevic,M/Dubna 1979](#). Here White plays an interesting trade of a piece for four pawns, then wins the piece back for three pawns. Semi-

obscure and easy to fall for— if you don't know it. 5...♗xc3 is not good, as it helps White's development: 6 dxc3! d6 7 cxd6 exd6 8 ♕c4 ♕e7 9 ♕f4 with an obvious advantage for White.) 6 d4 ♗xc3 7 bxc3 b6! Black immediately undermines the White pawn chain and intends ...Ba6 (not obligatory). 8 ♖g4! White's play is consistent: pursuing the initiative at any cost. Now very interesting complications arise, with chances for both sides, [Sveshnikov,E–Solozhenkin,E/Russia 1998](#).

5...e6

5...c6 6 ♗c3 (6 ♖f3!? e6 7 d4 b6 8 cxb6 axb6 9 ♗h3 ♕a6 [Rose,M–Davies,N/4NCL Birmingham 2001](#).) 6...e6 7 d4 b6 8 cxb6 axb6 9 ♖g4 ♗xc3 10 bxc3 ♕a6 11 ♕xa6 ♗xa6 12 ♗e2 ♗c7 13 0-0 g6?! Black is being intimidated by the Queen on g4. 13...g6 is very compliant. Instead, if he sticks to his guns and goes for counterplay with (13...d5! he gets a good game.) 14 ♗g3 h5 15 ♖f3 b5 16 ♗e4 ♕e7 17 ♕g5 0-0 18 ♗f6+→ [Sevillano,E–Bego,N/North American Open, Las Vegas USA 2002](#).

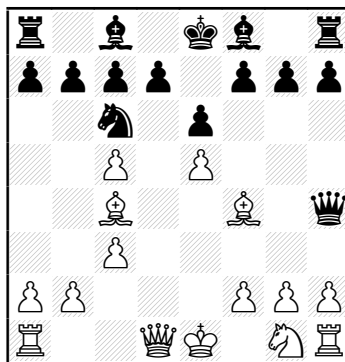
6 ♗c3

6 d4 b6!? (after 6...d6 7 cxd6 exd6 suddenly we have a position from the 2.c3 Sicilian!) 7 cxb6 axb6 8 ♗e2 [Potkin,V–Neverov,V/St Petersburg 2000](#).
6 ♖g4!? is unusual, but Nurkic has played this before, [Nurkic,S–Leventic,I/Neum BIH 2002](#).

6...♗xc3 7 dxc3 ♗c6 8 ♕f4

After 8 ♗f3 Black can take the pawn 8...♕xc5, and 9.Qg4 is illegal now.

8...♖h4!?



A very interesting idea of the Romanian GM Mikhai Suba. This move wins a pawn by force, and White has to prove he has sufficient compensation for it.

9 g3 ♖e7

Now White has to choose which pawn (e5 or c5) to sacrifice.

10 b4

Black is okay but has to be careful, as White has many dangerous attacking possibilities which Alekhine players need to study, [Posch, W–Baburin, A/Wien 1995](#).

Alekhine's Defence – Four Pawns Attack

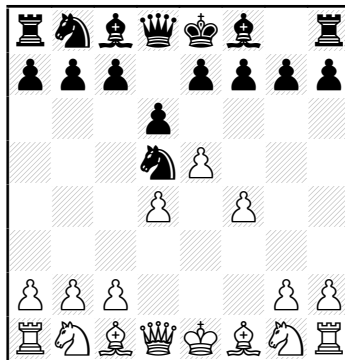
[B03]

Last updated: 12/03/04 by Andy Martin

One of the most interesting lines in the Alekhine's is the Four Pawns Attack. Some experts believe it's the most dangerous for Black. But in practice White chooses it rather infrequently, probably due to the necessity of knowing mountains of variations.

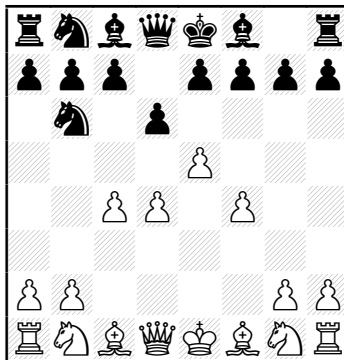
1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4

Vitolins and Kupreichik have championed the immediate 4 f4



4...dxe5 (4... ♗f5 5 ♘f3 e6 6 ♗d3 ♗xd3 7 ♕xd3 was [Vitolinsh,A–Shmit,A/USSR 1976](#)) 5 fxe5 c5 (5... ♗f5 6 ♘f3 c5?! 7 ♗b5+ ♘c6 8 c4 ♘c7 9 0-0 e6 10 ♗xc6+ bxc6 11 ♕a4 was unpleasant for Black in [Kupreichik,V–Alburt,L/Ashkhabad 1978](#)) 6 ♘f3 cxd4 7 ♕xd4 ♘c6 8 ♗b5 ♕a5+ (8... ♗f5! looked very good for Black in a recent game: 9 ♘c3 e6 10 ♕a4 ♘db4 11 ♗xc6+ bxc6 12 ♗e3 ♗xc2 13 b3 ♕d3 → [Pelikian,J–Milos,G/Sao Paulo BRA 2004](#) Black has a tremendous initiative.) 9 ♘c3 ♘xc3 10 ♗xc6+ bxc6 11 ♗d2 ♘b5 12 ♗xa5 ♘xd4 brought about a complex and double-edged endgame in [Kupreichik,V–Kengis,E/Podolsk 1990](#)

4...♘b6 5 f4



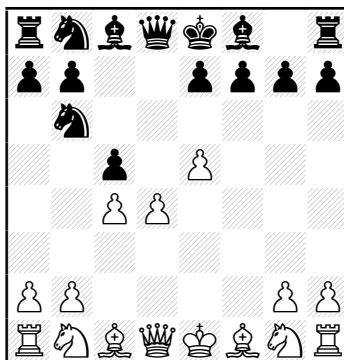
5...dxe5

5...♔f5!? 6 ♘c3 e6 This move order isn't all that common, but it causes no harm to Black, and can even give White a few extra opportunities to make a false step. 7 ♘f3 This is already a sign that White is unsure about what is going on. (The correct move is 7 ♔e3, after which 7...dxe5 8 fxe5 transposes to one of the main lines.) 7...♘a6 8 ♔d3 [Djurhuus,R–Agdestein,S/ Asker NOR 2000](#). Although the game looks quite devastating, a closer inspection reveals that White might have been able to defend. Nonetheless, Black triumphed elegantly in this game.

5...g6!? is another playable possibility for Black. This line is played rather seldom, but obviously it deserves more attention. 6 ♘c3 ♔g7 7 ♔e3 [Brenner–Pushkin/USSR 1988](#).

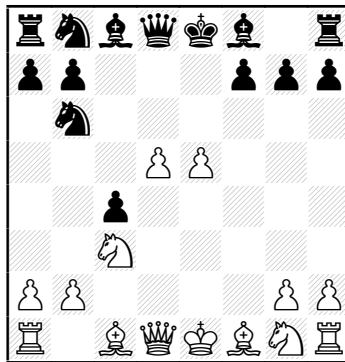
6 fxe5 ♘c6

6...c5!?



This move leads to a very sharp game. This is why it is often played by such brilliant tacticians as Lubomir Ljubojevic and Alex Shabalov. Although a lot of games have been played in this line, the last word has yet to be said. 7 d5 e6 (7...g6 is a line that is

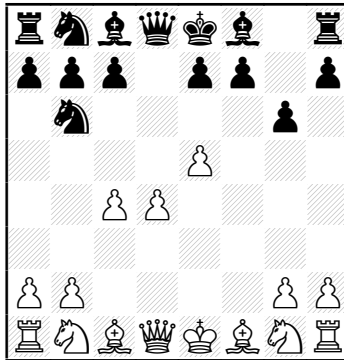
not very often seen in modern practice, but is by no means bad. It leads to sharp and complicated play— exactly what Black aims for by playing the Alekhine's. 8 ♕f4 ♕g7 9 ♖c3 [Volzhin,A–Svechnikov,L/Russia 1988](#) and [Riedel,F–Schneizer,R/Germany 1994](#)) 8 ♖c3 (The seemingly strong 8 d6 has a tactical refutation: 8... ♗h4+ 9 g3 ♗e4+ 10 ♗e2 ♗xh1 11 ♖f3 White hopes to trap Black's Queen, but Black has good chances to escape. 11... ♖c6! 12 ♖bd2 ♖d7! 13 ♖f2 ♖dx5! 14 ♖xe5 ♗xh2+ 15 ♕g2 ♖d4 16 ♗d1 ♖xd6 17 ♖f1 Now the Queen really is trapped, but White has paid too high a price for it! 17... ♗xg2+ 18 ♖xg2 ♖xe5 with a decisive advantage for Black. Bent Larsen once opined that he didn't like lengthy variations, as they always contain mistakes. I tend to share his scepticism, but sometimes we can't do without them!) 8...exd5 9 cxd5 c4



The critical position. White has a wide choice of continuations.

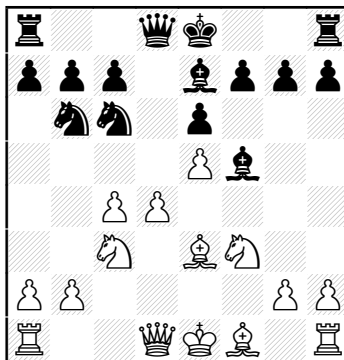
- a) 10 a3 ♕c5 The first achievement for Black: White cannot castle kingside. 11 ♖f3 0-0 12 ♕e2 [Vetmaa,Y–Shabalov,A/USSR 1986](#), which shows how Black can crush an unprepared opponent in twenty moves. Black's winning move is a must see.
- b) 10 ♖f3 The Main line. 10...♕b4! The move which rehabilitated this line for Black— in the main line it leads to an endgame in which Black gets excellent positional compensation for a pawn. (10...♕g4 11 ♗d4! ♖xf3 12 gxf3 [Gruenfeld,Y–Ljubojevic,L/Riga 1979](#).) 11 ♖xc4 ♖xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♖xc4 13 ♗a4+ ♖d7 14 ♗xc4 [Shulman,Y–Baburin,A/San Francisco USA 2001](#).
- c) 10 d6! 10...♖c6 (10...♕e6!?! [Movsesian,S–Luther,T/4th IECC, Istanbul TUR 2003](#)) 11 ♖f3 (11 ♖b5 not the only move to cause Black some sticky moments as White probably stands well after the alternatives, see [Bender,I–Rogulj,B/Velika Gorica CRO 2002](#).) 11...♕g4 12 ♕f4 g5 13 ♖c4 gxf4 14 ♖f6+ ♗xf6 15 exf6 0-0-0 16 ♗c1 ♖e8+ 17 ♖f2 ♖xd6 [Bryson,D–Luther,T/Olympiad, Bled SLO 2002](#) eventually, White had to bale out!

This is another moment at which Black has tried a kingside fianchetto – 6...g6



7 c3 (7 $\text{f3!?$ g7 8 e2 0-0 9 0-0 c5 10 d5 Pinchon,H–Timmermans,D/Val Thorens 1989)
 7... g7 8 c5 (8 e3 0-0 9 f3 c5 10 d5 g4 was good for Black in Fish,A–Sharp,P/Birmingham 4NCL 1999 8 f3 g4 9 c5 d5 10 c4 e6 Parma,P–Schiffer,K/Berlin 1971) 8... d5 9 c4 xc3 10 bxc3 0-0 11 f3 b6 with double-edged play in Rigo,J–Andruet,G/Wuppertal 1986.
 6... f5 7 c3 e6 8 e3 b4 9 f3 c5 10 $\text{d2?!$ is a very poor novelty, Boroday,S–Moliboga,V/Independence Cup, Kyiv UKR 2003, (10 a3 is better.)

7 e3 f5 8 c3 e6 9 f3 e7



This is the main line.

9... g4 10 e2 xf3 11 gxf3 h4+ (11... d7 is another possibility, putting pressure on d4 .)
 12 f2 f4 is a line that is supposed to be OK for Black but in fact may leave him with some problems. Two bishops are worth something in the endgame and a few canny exponents of the White pieces have cottoned on to this, see Timman,J–De Firmian,N/Malmoe SWE 2001, although perhaps Black doesn't agree, see Atalik,S–De Firmian,N/San Francisco USA 2002.
 9... $\text{d7?!$ An older variation, wheeled out for surprise by Nigel Short. 10 e2 0-0-0 11 0-0 f6 12 d5 xe5 13 xc5 fxe5 14 a4 a5 15 b5 b4 16 d6 a8 Black's position gives cause for concern, Kotronias,V–Short,N/Gibraltar Masters, Catalan Bay ENG 2003.

I don't like 9...♙b4 Kobese,W–Bouah,L/ch–RSA, Kempton Park RSA 2003.

10 d5

This is considered to be White's main weapon.

10 ♙e2 is possible, but in my opinion it's hardly consistent: after choosing the very sharp Four Pawns attack White switches to slow positional play. 10...0-0 11 0-0 Yudasin,L–Kengis,E/Minsk 1985.

10...exd5 11 cxd5 ♖b4 12 ♖d4 ♙d7 13 e6!

The most dangerous continuation, which leads to unfathomable complications. Theoretically crucial and tremendous fun to boot– this is real chess!

13 ♖f3 c5 14 dxc6 bxc6 15 e6 Pegoraro,G–Henderson,J/Ischia 1996. This game shows the dangers White faces in the Four Pawns Attack. A stunning innovation on move 18 followed by a Queen sacrifice improves on old theory. The White King has no chance of escaping from the crossfire of enemy pieces. An obscure masterpiece.

13...fxe6 14 dxe6 ♙c6 15 ♖g4

Klinger,J–Herndl,H/AUT–ch 1985.

Alekhine's Defence Exchange – + other

3rd moves [B03]

Last updated: 11/06/04 by Andy Martin

There is quite a bit of interest in the Exchange Variation nowadays. As we concluded earlier, it's quite unpleasant for Black as he has no active counterplay and White has had very good results. But recently Black has found new resources both with 5...cd and 5...ed.

1 e4 ♖f6 2 e5 ♗d5 3 d4 d6

3...g6?! is inviting a disaster. To play such rubbish against a strong grandmaster is not exactly the best solution. Probably Black believed that the move order is not important here and hoped to play ...d7–d6 later. Of course, White should play very energetically and creatively to refute this provocative play. 4 c4 ♗b6 5 c5! ♗d5 6 ♕c4 The transformation to the Chase Variation is quite the thing here, as g7–g6 in this line is just a waste of time and weakens Black's position. As we saw earlier, Black should undermine White's pawn chain (...d7–d6 or ...b7–b6) prior to developing his kingside, [Sutovsky,E–Varga,Z/European Club Cup 1999](#).

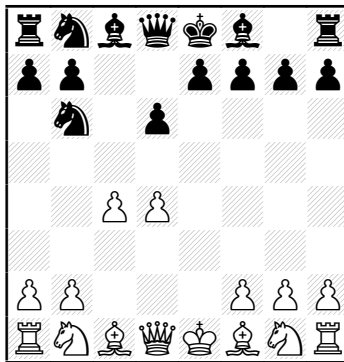
4 c4 ♗b6

Some White players don't like the wild complications that are unavoidable in the Four Pawns Attack. I can recommend the following system to them.

5 exd6

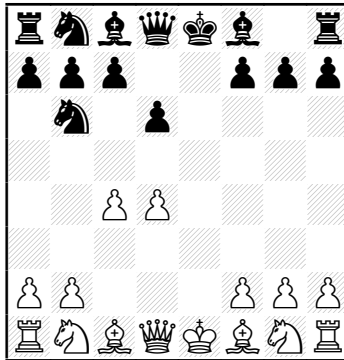
Currently this harmless looking move is very popular. Black has two possible recaptures.

5...cxd6



This move is much more popular than the alternative, but it would be too easy to draw any conclusions about the relative strengths of the moves from that!

5...exd6



Taking back with the e-pawn tends to lead to more balanced positions, while 5...cxd6 leads to more dynamic positions.

a) 6 ♖d3 ♗e7 7 ♘e2 0-0 8 ♗bc3 ♗c6 (8... ♗g4 9 f3 ♗h5 was [Simons,M-Baburin,A/Monarch Assurance 2001](#) and [Davies,N-Sinha,K/Calcutta 1990](#).) 9 0-0 ♜e8 (9... ♗f6 [Naiditsch,A-Timman,J/Dortmund GER 2002](#), and [Sermek,D-Zelcic,R/Makarska \(Croatia\) 1994](#).) 10 a3 (10 b3 ♗f8 [Emms,J-Davies,N/Redbus rd1 2002](#)) 10... ♗f6 [Shaw,J-Davies,N/4NCL 2002](#).

b) 6 ♗c3

b1) 6... ♗c6!? A relatively new idea. This move looks provocative, but it is by no means bad! The idea behind the text is to prevent White's set-up with Bd3 and Nge2. 7 d5 (7 ♗e3 ♗e7 8 ♗f3 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♜e8 10 0-0 ♗g4 11 b3 ♗f6= [Pedersen,O-Wohl,A/Oslo NOR 2004](#) leads to a traditional position. With pawn jabs such as ...a5-a4 or...d6-d5 available, Black is comfortable.) 7... ♗e5 8 f4 ♗ed7 9 ♗d4 By playing this move White hoped to put the brakes on Black's normal development. However an unpleasant surprise awaits him, see [Minasian,A-Minasian,A/ch-ARM, Yerevan 1999](#).

b2) 6... ♗c6 the Bd3 set-up would not be possible.

b3) 6...♗e7

b3a) 7 ♖f3!?! is losing novelty value. As the line has become more popular so antidotes have been discovered. 7...♗c6 (7...0-0 8 ♗e3 c6 9 0-0-0 d5 is good, but,) 8 ♗e3 0-0 9 0-0-0 ♗g5 (9...f5?! [Kortschnoj,V–Miles,A/Biel 1992](#)) 10 ♗h3 ♗xe3+ 11 fxe3 ♖h4 12 g3 ♖g4!± might be even better, [Smolovic–Drazic Belgrade 2003](#).

b3b) 7 ♗d3! is one of White's better tries against 5...exd6, but is likely to transpose to 6 ♗d3, 7...0-0 was unsuccessful recently: (7...♗c6 8 ♗ge2 ♗g4 9 f3 ♗h5) 8 ♗ge2 ♗c6 9 b3! with advantage, [Aroshidze,L–Chigladze,I/European GP, Izmir TUR 2003](#)

b3c) 7 h3 ♗f5 8 ♗f3 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♗f6 10 0-0 ♗c6 [Schubert,S–Kopylov,M/Oslo NOR 2001](#)

b3d) 7 ♗f3 7...0-0 8 ♗e2 ♗g4 9 0-0 ♗c6 (9...c5!?) [Dvoiry,S–Zilberman,Y/Dieren NED 2000](#)) 10 d5 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 ♗e5 [Belkhodja,S–Vaganian,R/Moscow RUS 2001](#).

6 ♗c3 g6 7 ♗e3

7 h3 is [Nataf,I–Konopka,M/Pardubice CZE 2002](#), in [B04].

7 a4 was recommended by Soltis in one of his opening books. White disrupts Black's natural plan of development. a reaction in the centre is appropriate but how best to organise it? 7...♗g7 8 a5 ♗6d7 9 ♗f3 0-0 10 ♗e2 e5 11 0-0 ♗e8N 12 ♗b5 e4 [Buescu,N–Grunberg,M/ch–ROM, Satu Mare ROM 2003](#) A very double-edged position has arisen.

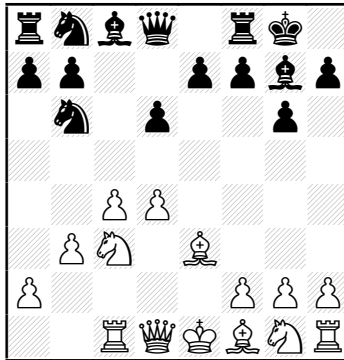
7...♗g7 8 ♗c1

A very clever decision: first of all White develops his queenside, overprotecting the knight on c3.

8...0-0

8...♗c6 9 d5 ♗e5 10 ♗e2 0-0 11 b3 8.Rc1 made this move possible. Now 12.f4 is an unpleasant threat. 11...f5 12 f4 Black has problems: [Howell,J–Panchenko,A/Hamburg 1995](#).

9 b3!?



9...e5

9...f5!? is an interesting attempt to create counterplay. 10 ♘f3!? Other moves are possible, also with a slight advantage for White. 10...f4 11 ♙d2 ♘c6 12 d5 [Ivanov,V–Chekhov,V/Moscow 1995](#).

10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♙xd8

I don't believe the alternative:

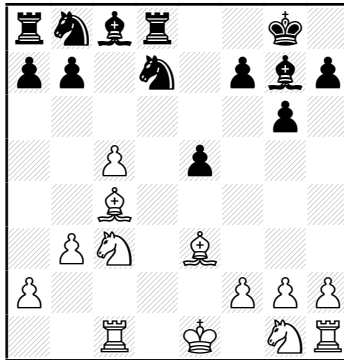
11 c5 ♘6d7 12 ♙c4 Up to now this is all well-known theory. 12...♙a5! A novelty, according to my database. This move seems quite risky and ambitious, but it provides a good chance for Black to fight for the initiative. 13 ♘ge2 ♘c6 14 a3 [Rowson,J–Baburin,A/Isle of Man 1999](#).

11...♙xd8 12 c5

12 ♘b5?! is too optimistic, as Black obtains excellent counterplay after 12...♘c6! 13 ♘xa7 ♘d4! and White is in big trouble.

12...♘6d7 13 ♘f3!

13 ♙c4



One would think this would be fine for Black but a several times US Champion lost without making an obvious error in [Dzindzichashvili,R-Alburt,L/Parsippany 1996](#).

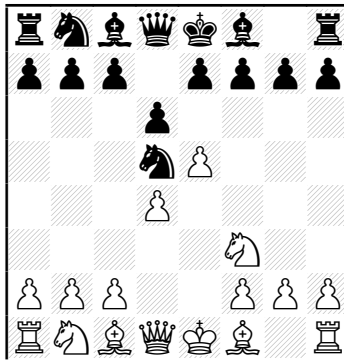
13...♖c6 14 ♘c4 h6 15 ♘e4 ♜e8 16 0-0 ♜e7 17 ♘d6 ♘f8 18 ♘xc8 ♜xc8 19 ♘d2±

White has a nagging edge and the two Bishops, [Adams,M-Santo Roman,M/France 2004](#).

Alekhine's Defence – 4 Nf3 without 4...Bg4 [B04]

Last updated: 10/08/04 by Andy Martin

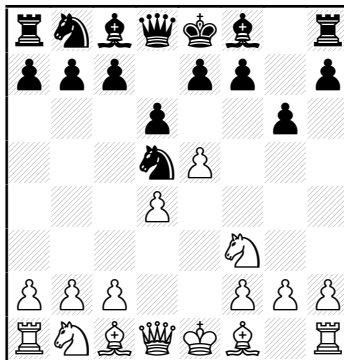
1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3



4...dxe5

An old move, revived by Bent Larsen.

4...g6

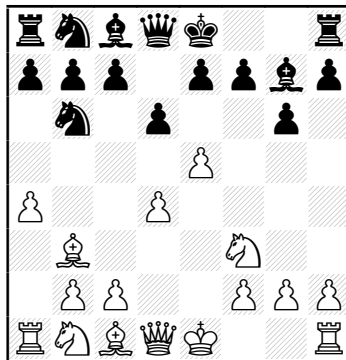


This line is thought of as ultra-solid, but the Pawn on e5 can be a permanent thorn in Black's side. 5 ♖c4 ♜b6 (5...c6!? 6 exd6 ♞xd6 7 0-0 ♙g7 8 h3 a promising continuation for White as Black's bishop is denied it's most active square, see [Svidler,P-Akopian,V/Halkidiki GRE 2002](#)) 6 ♙b3 ♙g7

a) 7 ♞e2!? ♜c6 8 ♜bd2 (8 0-0 0-0 9 h3 a5 10 a4 dxe5 11 dxe5 ♜d4 12 ♜xd4 ♞xd4 13 ♞e1 [Short,N-Timman,J/Tilburg 1991](#).) 8...0-0 (8...♙g4? is simply bad on account of the tactical trick 9 ♙xf7+ intending 9...♙xf7 10 ♜g5+ followed by 11 Qxg4.) 9 h3 Now White does take a prophylactic measure to stop ...Bg4, which really is a threat after Black has castled. 9...h6?! 10 c3! This not only supports White's central pawn-chain, but also allows White's light-squared bishop to drop back to c2 if attacked by ... Na5. 10...♙h7 11 h4! [Motwani,P-Tan,K/Tilburg Eksakt Weekender, Holl 2000](#).

b) The immediate 7 ♜g5 has also been played, but this move is not as strong since the addition of the moves 7.a2-a4 a7-a5 favours White, as we'll see later. 7...d5?! Alburts 7...e6 is the best way for Black to continue. 8 f4 f6 9 ♜f3 [Ishkhamov,T-Chernin,O/Las Vegas 2002](#).

c) 7 a4!



The most dangerous line for Black.

c1) 7...dxe5!? is a very sharp move which leads to wild complications. 8 a5 (8 ♜xe5 is harmless: 8...♙xe5! 9 dxe5 ♞xd1+ 10 ♙xd1 ♜c6 and in this ending Black has no real problems.) 8...♜6d7 9 ♙xf7+! This sharp combo is the only way to fight for an opening advantage. The alternatives are absolutely harmless. 9...♙xf7 10 ♜g5+ ♙g8 11 ♜c6 ♞c8 12 ♜xc7 ♞d8! This move was introduced by American GM Lev Alburts in the early nineties. (This line had previously been discredited because of a game in which Black had played 12...♞f7, but did not get enough for the exchange. Alburts' move is a significant improvement. Now White's Knight can't escape from a8.) 13 ♜xa8 (White can take a draw: 13 ♜e6 ♞e8 14 ♜c7 as he did in [Svidler-Khalifman 1995](#), however White can hardly be happy with this result.) 13...exd4 14 0-0!? The latest development. (In my opinion, this move is more precise than the immediate 14 c3 ♜c5 15 cxd4 ♙xd4 16 ♙e3 e5 [Oral,T-De Firmian,N/Reykjavik 2000](#).) 14...♜c6 15 c3 ♜c5 16 b4 The critical position for the whole line, [Almasi,Z-De la Villa Garcia,J/Pamplona 2000](#).

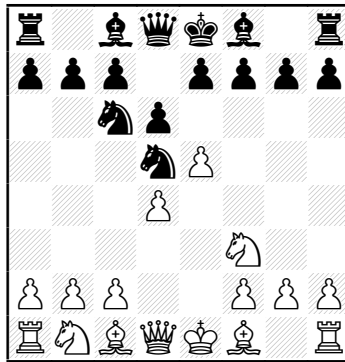
c2) 7...a5 This natural move is Black's most frequent choice. 8 ♖g5! This move still remains one of White's main weapons. 8...c6 9 f4 dxe5 The only way for Black to obtain counterplay is to challenge the centre. 10 fxe5 c5

c2a) 11 0-0 is less precise,

c2a1) Black could have exploited this inaccuracy by playing 11...♙xd4+! Volzhin 12 ♙xd4 cxd4 with excellent prospects: 13 ♖xf7 (or 13 ♖xf7 ♕xe5) 13...0-0!

c2a2) 11...0-0? 12 c3 ♖c6?! Black doesn't want to give White's knight the c3-square after the exchange on d4. 13 ♖e4! White is not forced to protect the d4 pawn at all! [Kasparov,G–Palatnik,S/Duagavpils 1978.](#)

c2b) 11 c3! 11...cxd4 12 0-0! 0-0 13 cxd4 [Grischuk,A–Ponomariov,R/Torshavn 2000.](#)
4...♖c6



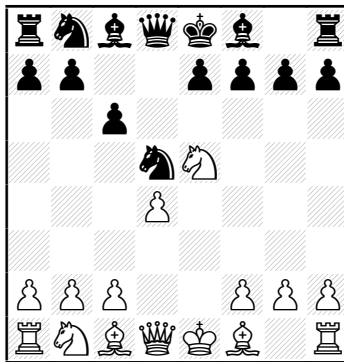
5 c4 This move drives back Black's knight from the centre. 5...♖b6 6 exd6 exd6 (6...cxd6 7 ♕e2 g6?! 8 d5! [Motwani,P–Pedersen,D/Vordingborg, Denmark 1980.](#)) 7 h3 ♕e7 8 ♕e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♕f6 10 ♖c3 ♖e8 11 b3 [Adams,M–Nakamura,H/Tripoli LBA 2004.](#) Perhaps White is a shade better, certainly he should not lose this position.

4...c6 5 c4 ♖c7 6 exd6 exd6 7 ♖c3 ♕g4 8 h3 ♕h5 9 ♕e3 ♕e7 10 g4 ♕g6 11 ♙b3 ♙c8 led to sharp play in [Gallagher,J–Baburin,A/Monarch Assurance 2001.](#)

5 ♖xe5 g6

This move, the Kengis Variation, is solid and reliable. It was revived by the Latvian GM Vladimir Bagirov, and, of course, his compatriot GM Edvins Kengis is an old adherent of this line too.

5...c6



This, Tony Miles' pet line, is actually quite an interesting idea.

Black wants to challenge White's knight on e5 with ...♞d7 without having to worry about that nasty piece sac that occurs after 5...♞d7 (6.♞xf7!). Unlike the Kengis variation (5...g6) Black is not committed to a kingside fianchetto and can often develop his queen's bishop actively on either g4 or f5. Having said that, I believe that White must be able to preserve at least a tiny edge.

- a) 6 c4 ♞c7 (Black has also played the naive-looking 6...♞b4 and perhaps it isn't bad.) 7 ♞c3 ♞d7 8 ♞xd7 ♟xd7 9 ♟e3 [Short,N-Miles,A/Ohrid MKD 2001](#).
- b) 6 ♟e2! This would be my choice. Develop, castle, rook to e1 and then look for the right moment to play c2-c4! 6...♟f5 (6...♞d7 7 ♞f3 g6 8 c4 ♞c7 9 ♞c3 ♟g7 [Degraeve,J-Miles,A/Mondariz ESP 2000](#).) 7 g4!? Kasparov hopes to use his advanced knight for this active thrust, but had he really calculated the consequences of Black's ninth? 7...♟c6 8 c4?! [Kasparov,G-Short,N/Moscow RUS 2002](#).
- c) 6 ♞d2 White aims to maintain his knight on e5, hoping that this will guarantee a slight space advantage. But with a pair of minor pieces exchanged this won't mean very much. 6...♞d7 7 ♞df3 ♞xe5 8 ♞xe5 g6 9 ♞f3 [Tiviakov,S-Van der Werf,M/Leuwarden NED 2001](#).
- d) 6 ♟d3 is rather quiet but White may be able to work up a small nagging edge. 6...♞d7 7 0-0! (7 ♞f3 ♞7f6 8 h3 ♞b4! The Bishop has been used as a target to facilitate Black counterplay. 9 ♟c4 ♟f5 10 ♞e5 e6 11 ♞a3 ♟d6 12 0-0 h6 13 c3 ♞bd5 14 ♞c2 ♞c7 15 ♟d3 ♟xe5 16 dxe5 ♟xd3 17 ♞xd3 ♞xe5± [Del-Rio-Angelis,S-Conquest,S/4th IECC, Istanbul TUR 2003](#) Black went on to consolidate and win.) 7...♞xe5 8 dxe5 ♞b4 9 ♟e4 ♞xd1 10 ♞xd1 f5 11 a3 ♞a6 12 ♟f3 g6 13 ♞d2 ♟e6 14 ♟e2 ♞c7 15 ♞f3 ♟d5 16 ♞d4 ♟g7 17 c4 ♟f7 18 f4!± [Sutovsky,E-Carlsen,M/ECC, Rethymnon GRE 2003](#) Black has some problems to solve.
- e) 6 ♟c4 Arguably White's most natural move. Others: 6...♞d7 7 ♞f3 ♞7b6 This allows Black to develop his bishop to g4. (7...b5 might not be too bad. 8 ♟b3 e6 9 0-0 ♟b7 10 ♞bd2 c5 11 c4 bxc4 12 ♞xc4 ♟e7 13 ♟g5 0-0 14 ♟xe7 ♞xe7 15 ♞d6 ♟xf3 16 ♞xf3 cxd4 17 ♞xf7∞ [Gallagher,J-Wohl,A/4NCL, Telford ENG 2003](#) Randomising! 7...e6 8 0-0 ♟e7 9 ♟b3 b5 10 ♞e1 0-0 11 a4 ♞7f6 12 ♞e2 b4 13 ♞e5 ♟b7 14 a5± [Skripchenko,A-Conquest,S/Pulvermuehle GER 2004](#)) 8 ♟b3 ♟g4 9 ♞bd2 e6 10 0-0 [Van der Weide,K-Miles,A/Saint Vincent ITA 2000](#).

- 5...♠d7!? This move was introduced by the Danish Viking Bent Larsen in one of his candidates matches against Mikhail Tal. Tal didn't dare take on f7, afraid that he would have to settle for a draw. However, for many years Nxf7 was considered the refutation of 5...Nd7, although this is no longer the case.
- a) 6 ♠f3 If White isn't up to the challenge of 6 Nxf7, this is an excellent alternative. Videki & Krizsany consider this White's best option after 5...Nd7. 6...e6 7 g3 The positional treatment. (White can also opt for the more aggressive 7 c4) 7...♙e7 8 ♙g2 [Groszpeter,A–Pitschka,K/Pardubice CZE 2000](#).
- b) 6 ♠xf7!? 6...♙xf7 7 ♖h5+ ♙e6 The king has to go to the centre.
- b1) 8 g3! This is probably the best move here. 8...b5 9 a4 c6 10 ♠c3? (10 ♙h3+! is essential, driving the black king to d6) 10...g6 [Navara,D–Miroshnichenko,E/Antalya TUR 2004](#).
- b2) 8 c4 8...♠5f6 9 d5+ ♙d6 10 ♖f7 ♠e5!? After considering different knight moves the conclusion is obvious: the knight should go to the centre! 11 ♙f4 Now 12.c5 is threatened, so Black's next move is forced. 11...c5 12 ♠c3 a6 13 b4 Currently considered to be White's best try, and hair-raising complications ensue. (13 0-0-0 This old main line has fallen into disuse, but do you fancy the Black position circa move 15? 13...g6! This is the point. 14...Bh6 is threatened. 14 ♙xe5+ ♙xe5 15 d6 [Rozentalis,E–Sokolov,A/Bern 1992](#).) 13...♖b6! This move seems to be the only chance for defence. Alternatives are insufficient. 14 0-0-0 (14 bxc5+ was thought to be a winning move, but recent games have changed the evaluation of this position.) 14...cxb4! A very important novelty, the notes to the game [Mysliwiec,E–Krzyzanowski,A/corr 1995](#), reveal the current theoretical evaluation of this line, and things are looking good for Black. Take a risk and win!

6 c4

At the present time this looks like the most dangerous continuation. White takes bags of space, putting the onus on Black to find counterplay.

- 6 ♖f3 looks quite interesting and I don't know why its played so rarely. 6...♙e6 (In 'The Complete Alekhine' (1992) Burgess opined that 6...f6 was probably necessary but then reconsidered this view in 1996 ('New Ideas in the Alekhine Defence'). My view is that if Black has to play the ugly 6 ...f6 the Kengis variation would be put out of business.) 7 c4 ♠b4 The only move. 8 ♖xb7
- a) Burgess and his trusty computer award this move a '?!' and give some convoluted lines based on 8...♠c2+ 9 ♙d1 ♠xa1 10 ♖xa8 ♙g7 11 ♙d2 (or 11 ♖b7 – Fleck) 11...c5!?, "all of which requires careful analysis". I'd prefer to skip the 'careful analysis' and go down the pub. Taking on d4 feels right to me.
- b) 8...♖xd4! 9 ♖xa8 ♖xe5+ (Burgess only gives 9...♠c2+ which feels all wrong to me. I like my knights where they are, bringing 'Dobbin' (the one on b4) back to c6 keeps White's queen out of play. Meanwhile Black will race ahead with the rest of his development – good compensation for the exchange as White's king is in the middle. This is the kind of factor that materialistic computers tend to underestimate. Let us see some analysis of Volzhin: 10 ♙e2 ♖xe5+ 11 ♙d1 ♖d4+ 12 ♠d2 The few previous moves were forced, 12...♠xa1 13 ♖xb8+ ♙d7 14 ♖b5+ ♙d8 15 ♖b8+ ♙d7 16 ♖b5+ It seems this line is a sufficient defence for Black although I suspect either side may

improve here. This line needs practical tests.) 10 ♖d1 ♜4c6 11 ♜c3 ♗g7 12 ♗e3 0-0
[Ernst,T-Josefsson,K/Sweden 1983](#).

6 ♗c4 Currently the most popular continuation. 6...c6 7 0-0 (7 ♜d2 White intends to reinforce e5 with his other knight. 7...♗g7 8 ♜df3 [Nijboer,F-Vaganian,R/NED 2001](#).)
 7...♗g7 8 ♝e1 0-0 9 ♗b3

a) 9...♗e6 10 c3 (10 ♜d2 ♜c7 11 c3 ♗d5? Poor. Black forgets that he has a King to defend. Naturally, 11...Nd7 had to be played. 12 ♖g4! a5 13 ♜df3 a4 14 ♗c2 ♗xf3 15 ♜xf3 ♜d7 16 ♖h4 e6 17 ♗g5 ♗f6 18 ♖h6 ♝a5 19 h4 ♝e8 20 ♝e4 → [Lane,G-Wallace,J/Canberra 2003](#) White has marshalled his forces excellently for the imminent winning attack.)
 10...♜d7 11 ♜f3 ♜c7 Now the exchange on e6 is forced, [Howell,J-Kengis,E/London 1991](#).

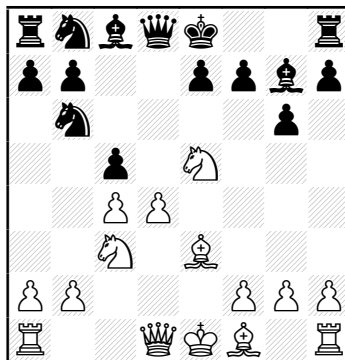
b) 9...♜d7!? Adams deviates from the next note. Unfortunately this stops us seeing the improvement Kasparov had prepared against 9... Be6. The text is an attempt to relieve Black's slight cramp by exchanging pieces. 10 ♜f3! White, who has a space advantage, should avoid any exchanges. 10...♜7f6 11 c4 ♜c7 12 h3 Otherwise Black starts pressurising the d4-square (...Bg4, ... Ne6). Now the bishop on c8 lacks good squares: [Kasparov,G-Adams,M/Linares 1997](#). White's accurate manoeuvres here seem to give his world class opponent no chance at all. A game worthy of study for two reasons: firstly, to see the current state of theory in a main line and secondly, to see the World Champion at his best.

6 ♜d2 For reasons known best to himself, Miles awarded this move two exclamation marks in Informator 67 and splattered more exclamation marks over the rest of the game. I suspect he was being ironic, especially in view of the fact that he later changed sides.
 6...♗g7 7 ♜df3 0-0 8 c4 ♜b6 9 ♗e2 [Miles,A-Pons,S/Andorra 1996](#).

6...♜b6 7 ♜c3 ♗g7 8 ♗e3

8 ♗f4 0-0 9 ♗e2 a5! 10 h4?! Quite a dubious move, as White has no real attacking chances, [Gallagher,J-Kengis,E/Bern 1992](#), (The simple 10 0-0 should be preferred, although I doubt whether White has any advantage.)

8...c5



The 'critical' line, but one which seems to leave Black fighting for a draw.

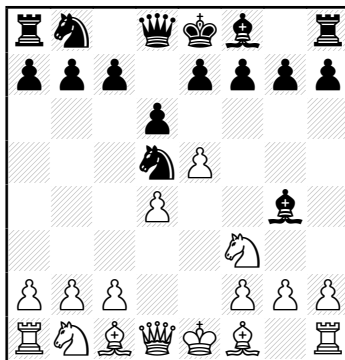
9 dxc5 ♖xd1+ 10 ♜xd1 ♘xe5 11 cxb6

Ernst,T-Bagirov,V/Helsinki (Finland) 1992.

Alekhine's Defence – 4 Nf3 Bg4 [B05]

Last updated: 16/10/02 by Glenn Flear

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♗g4



The Main line of the Alekhine's, and Black is currently having serious problems – certainly the statistics are very poor for him. In many lines White enjoys a small but steady edge, while Black is compelled to passive defence without serious chances of counterplay. Clearly Black urgently needs new ideas, otherwise it's time to switch to another variation.

5 ♗e2 e6

The alternative is 5...c6 6 0-0 ♗xf3 7 ♗xf3 dxe5 8 dxe5 e6 9 ♖e1 ♘d7 10 ♘d2

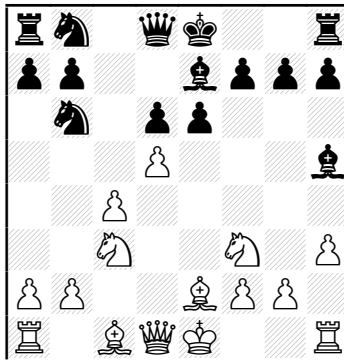
a) 10...♞b8?! An attempt at an improvement on 10...Qc7. 11 ♘c4 b5 Now Gufeld's combination doesn't work. 12 ♘d6+ This pawn sacrifice is forced but strong! [Cmilyte,V–Zhukova,N/Istanbul Olympiad 2000](#).

b) 10...♞c7?! This natural looking move is a waste of time. 11 ♘c4 ♘7b6! The only move. (11...b5? This optimistic move allows a brilliant combination. 12 ♗xd5! cxd5 13 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 14 ♞xd5!! a lovely but easy to miss Queen sacrifice, [Gufeld,E–Goh,C/Penang 1991](#)) 12 ♞d4!? ♘xc4 13 ♞xc4 White is slightly better due to the Bishop pair and space advantage. On the other hand, Black's position is very solid, with no weaknesses or bad pieces. 13...0-0-0 14 a3 [Malakhov,V–Sedina,E/Porto San Giorgio 1999](#).

c) 10...♔e7 Quiet moves such as the text move seem to be the only playable possibilities for Black in this variation. Attempts to win the e5-pawn are too risky for Black: 11 ♖c4! 0-0 12 a4 a5 13 ♕d2 [Baklan,V-Kosikov,A/Kiev 2000](#).

6 0-0

6 h3 ♕h5 7 c4 ♜b6 8 exd6 cxd6 9 ♜c3 ♕e7 10 d5!



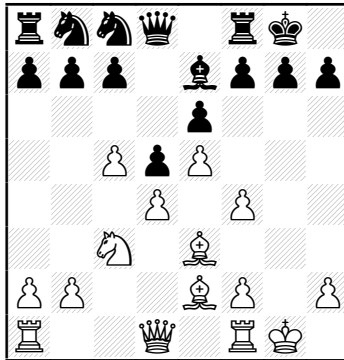
This natural move seems to be a novelty. Now White obtains a space advantage and prospects of a queenside attack. 10...e5 11 g4!? This is the most ambitious. It was introduced by Bologan. (11 ♕e3 ♕xf3!? 12 ♕xf3 ♜8d7 13 ♚e2 Black has a solid position (although White is slightly better), [Bologan,V-Tischbierek,R/Wien 1996](#)) 11...♕g6 12 h4 h5 13 g5 ♜8d7 14 ♕e3 The critical position for the whole line, see [Hamdouchi,H-Baburin,A/Saint Vincent 2000](#).

6...♕e7 7 c4 ♜b6 8 ♜c3

It is still not clear if White should interpolate 8 h3 Bh5 or not. Both variations have their merits and drawbacks.

8 h3 ♕h5 9 ♜c3 0-0 10 ♕e3 d5 11 c5 ♕xf3 12 gxf3!? This move became popular when it became clear, that (12 ♕xf3 offers nothing. The position after the text is a "tabia" of the 4...Bg4 line. It has occurred in hundreds of games.) 12...♜c8 13 f4 ♜c6 14 f5!? White takes the first opportunity to break in the centre. It is a very interesting, but probably somewhat premature, decision, (14 b4 [Fedorowicz,J-Baburin,A/San Francisco USA 2002](#)) 14...exf5 15 ♕f3 This is the idea behind 14. f5: the d5-pawn is defenceless. Now Black has to find counterplay, otherwise he'll be smashed by White's strong central pawns- [Aseev,K-Bagirov,V/Berlin 1990](#).

8...0-0 9 ♕e3 d5 10 c5 ♕xf3 11 gxf3 ♜c8 12 f4



We have suggested this line as the most dangerous for Black.

12...♘c6

12...♙h4?! 13 ♙d3 g6?! Another inaccuracy. (13...f5 is obligatory here. White is clearly better on both sides of the board, but Black's defensive resources should not be underestimated.) 14 f5! exf5 15 ♚f3! [Kobalija,M–Nalbandian,T/Moscow 1999](#).

13 b4

I believe this move is much more to the point than
13 f5

13...♙h4 14 b5

[Ulibin,M–Morovic Fernandez,I/Las Palmas 1992](#).